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INDUSTRIAL NORTH KOREA

by O Ik-kun

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INDUSTRIAL NORTH KOREA

[Following is a translation of an article by O Ik-kun
in the Russian-language newspaper Izvestiya, Moscow,
19 November 1958.]

As correspondent on industrial questions, I have frequent assignments from the newspaper to visit various plants, factories and constructions. Just now I was looking through the pages of my travel notes. As a result, I felt I had traveled through a new industrial Korea. Let us go together on this journey, dear Soviet readers!

Let us start with the Amnokgan, with the State Electric Power Plant (GES) of Supung -- the pride of our power engineering. Let us imagine that we arrive there late in the evening (as I did) on the eve of putting into operation this GES at full power.

Along the Rivers and Streams

Electric lights, iridescent and quivering, play on the water surface of the Amnokgan.

This big river flows evenly through the northern areas for a distance of over 500 kilometers. A dam retains its powerful water here; like a gigantic fortress this dam stands on the way of the Amnokgan.

A pre-operational commotion reigned at the dam and it was with difficulty that we found comrade Kan Do Dyun, chief of the cement sector. We knew that his rational proposals helped considerably to accelerate the reconstruction of the dam.

Kan Do Dyun described to us in detail all the stages of this tremendous work. Thanks to the assistance given by the Soviet Union, the reconstruction of the Supung GES and the starting of its operation on a new stronger power of 700,000 kilowatts were realized in 3 years 8 months instead of the 5 years provided for in the plan. Many difficulties arose during reconstruction but they were overcome by heroic labor of the builders and mounters. Soviet specialists came constantly to their rescue. And there it stands -- the victory of labor!

In conclusion, Kan Do Dyun said: "Later on, according to the plan of electrification, we will build power stations in Unbong, Uiju, Vivong, Makpo, and Dyungang along the Amnokgan River and the Sodus River, a tributary of the Tumangan River, and along the Taedong River Basin. The electric light will shine still brighter over the country and our economy will become stronger."

"The next time we shall meet in Unbong! We will move further along the rivers and streams," said Kan Do Dyun in bidding us good-by.

And indeed we did meet him shortly after that in Unbong where the construction of an electric power plant of 600,000 had begun. "It is largely the middle-aged people who come to work here," joked Kan Do Dyun, "the younger ones have their own project; they are building the Kanggye GES. It is at the foot of the Renkhvasan Mountain where flows the tributary of the Changjin. The power of this station will provide 240,000 kilowatts. Some comrades are working at the GES. There is enough work for hydrobuilders to lend a hand!"

Yes, there is much work for hydrobuilders at present. They are busy erecting not only large hydrotechnical installations, but also many small electric power stations.

On our return journey we crossed the plateau of Kema. It is traversed by high voltage lines transmitting electricity from Kowon to the plain. The lines transmit current to metallurgic plants, steel mills and pumping stations from the twelve cascade systems of the GES with a total power of 1 million kilowatts. This is the "white coal" from the rivers of Hechen, Changlin and Buden, which take their source at the mountain plain. Before long we will have many more small and large electric stations. Thermal power stations will be constructed in Pyongyang and in the centers of provinces. This is done with a view of increasing electric energy to 20,000,000,000 kilowatt-hours instead of the 6-7 billion available in recent years.

Iron and Steel Works

Current flows continuously to electric furnaces. Metal seethes. We came across two steel workers near one of the furnaces. They were Hero of Labor Kan Ren Kha from the Kansen Steel Mill here and Hero of Labor An San De, a visitor from the steel mill of Songjin.

"How were you able to reduce the melting time by 2 hours?" we said to Kan Ren Kha.

"We did this by learning how to use oxygen blowing from comrade An San De," was his answer, and An San De joined in "and we in turn are studying at this mill how to accelerate charging."

In this way the steel workers from two plants exchange experience. Let them talk while we look over the steel mill.

The panorama of a modern metallurgical enterprise opens to our view. We see the steel smelting workshop, which produces six times more metal than under the Japanese. Over there we see the rolling assembly, newly built after the war, the steel plate workshop and the electric cast iron workshop, which is under construction and which will have an annual capacity of half a million tons.

All these are found at the plant which was more than two thirds destroyed during the war. Recently a real technical revolution has been taking place at the Kansen Steel Mill. By persistently mechanizing

and automatizing, the steel mill workers almost tripled the productivity of labor. The workers have committed themselves to produce 330,000 tons of steel and 150,000 tons of rolled iron over the quantity provided for in the plan. They will fulfill their commitment.

Now let us go to Song-ni, which is 40 kilometers southwest of Pyongyang. Can you see the forest of factory chimneys rising above the city? The city is an important base of the ferrous metal industry. Here I visited the Hwang ju Metallurgical Works just at the time when the workers and specialists had achieved a new success. Although the nominal capacity of the plant was 500 tons, they raised the daily output of cast iron to 1,000 tons.

Hero of Labor Khan Gi Chan, chief of the blast furnace workshop, explained: "1,000 tons per 1 work day, this means that the efficiency in using the furnace improved to 0.56 of its volume!" I doubt that anyone could call Korean metallurgical technology backward. In the next year, without additional manpower, we will be able to produce 4 times more cast iron and rolled steel and we will double the production of steel.

In leaving the steel mill, we could visualize the nearby day when the No 2 and No 3 furnaces, now being constructed, would stand like twins next to the blast furnace. Then Hwangju will take a big step forward!

The metallurgists of the Eastern shore are not behind. The workers at the plant imeni Kim Chaka committed themselves to produce 900,000 tons of cast iron by the end of the five-year plan. They follow step in step with the metallurgists of the Western shore, producing over 1,000 tons of cast iron with a blast furnace of 500 tons.

With the introduction of new blast furnaces, open-hearth furnaces and rolling-mills, the capacity of metallurgy will increase considerably. In the next year, metallurgists will produce 1,000,000 tons of cast iron and lyuppa [?] and 8,000,000 tons of steel. The quota planned for 1961 will be surpassed. In the next few years, the production of the metallurgical industry will increase several times.

In the Remote Corners of Yesterday

Cast iron and steel from the plants of the Western and Eastern shores converge in Pyongyang. Then they move together north. If we stop at Huichon, a railroad station between Pyongyang and Manpojin, we can see there the unloading of metal sent to the machine-tool construction plants.

Now in the area which until quite recently was not marked in any way on the industrial map of Korea there stands one of our machine-building centers.

Not so long ago at the republic's exhibition of industry and agriculture, the attention of foreigners visiting the pavillion of machine-tool construction was drawn to a new model of lathe "CYU-50."

"Where is this lathe model produced?" asked one of the members of the Japanese trade delegation.

"It is produced in Huichon," answered the guide.

"In Huichon?" the unbelieving visitor asked once more. Probably he did not believe that this was true. But let us not be offended by this. He simply does not understand the changes occurring in Korea.

There were no plants in Huichon ten years ago. It was very out of the way and the inhabitants of this mountainous region could not venture to travel without danger: they could meet wild animals in the middle of the day. But now there stand the Huichon Machine-Tool Construction Plant and the Huichon Machine-building Plant.

A modern machine-tool and mining machine plants have been built in Kusong (North Pyongan Province), a mountainous and once remote region. In recent years, new machine-building enterprises have been created in Pyongyang, Kiyang, Nakpo, Tenchong, Sinidyu, Nakwon, Wonson, Changjin, Munchon, and other towns. These plants manufacture metal-working machine tools, electric and agricultural machines, construction machinery, motors, ships, and mining and other equipment. All this in the country where under the rule of the Japanese colonists, the specific weight of all machine construction in the economy was below 1%.

Hungham -- the Town of Chemistry

On approaching Hungham on the shore of the azure Eastern Sea, attention is drawn first of all to the huge towers of the Synthetic Plant of Ammonium Nitrate. The construction of this high capacity enterprise was completed in the spring of the current year with the assistance of the Soviet Union. The Ammonium Nitrate Plant equipped by the brotherly Soviet people with fully automatic processes is the newest chemical enterprise.

In Hungham, the chemical fertilizer plant completely destroyed during the war by bombs and shelling from the sea, was restored with the help of the Soviet friends in the form of generous assistance already during the post-war three-year plan. At present, it provides daily over 1,000 tons of fertilizer for villages.

As the director of the plant told us, the workers discover rich reserves for producing and putting into operation. This is necessary for a continued increase in the output of fertilizer to bring it to 1,000,000,000 tons by 1961.

Hungham is the city of the chemical industry. In the vicinity of the fertilizer plant, the construction of the Pongun Chemical Plant and of the Pharmaceutical Plant is under way, and the construction of other enterprises will soon begin. This branch of industry has a big future.

At the Pyongyang Textile Plant

Let us go back to the capital of the republic and stand on the bank of the Taedong River. In front of us we have the general view of the Pyongyang Textile Factory and of the silk-weaving mill, which will be shortly put into operation.

Let us visit some of the workshops. In one of them, the women workers, having finished their shift, discuss how to develop more widely a movement for innovations by workers. The discussion is conducted in a businesslike and animated manner. Proposals made by a young weaver are met with applause. She suggested increasing the revolutions of the loom from 200 to 250. The girl said:

"This is still just a spark. But beginning from the next year when the spark will grow into a flame, we will produce 7,000 meters of textiles per hour at the plant."

How not to applaud such a prospect! This number greatly surpasses the textiles produced in half a year in all North Korea before the liberation.

New textile enterprises are being built in Hamhung, Changjin, Kaesong, Kusong and other places. The textile industry will produce in 1961, 40 meters of textiles per person. This number will be even greater if we include also local industry.

It is time to stop our travel although it could be greatly extended. We have visited together several large centers of present-day industrial Korea and have even peeped into its future. And this is quite natural; the beautiful image of our socialist tomorrow is taking shape in its visible traits already today in the untiring labor of millions of workers.

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